



Embassy of the United States of America

Santiago, Chile

SUBJECT: Emergency Preparedness for Earthquakes

Nearly every year several major earthquakes strike different places around the world. These quakes can cause widespread damage, destruction, injury and death. When a major earthquake strikes, most deaths and injuries are caused by collapsing buildings, falling debris, flying glass, falling and moving furniture (bookcases and refrigerators), downed power lines, fires and landslides.

The key to surviving an earthquake is preparedness. Knowing what to do to prepare for an earthquake, what to do during an earthquake and what to do after an earthquake is critical. A key point to remember is that emergency services may not be readily available in the event of a major earthquake. Be prepared to help yourself and your family until official emergency services become available.

Earthquakes are a fact of life in Chile. Santiago usually experiences several quakes each year that are strong enough for people to notice. The good news is that local construction standards are such that lower-magnitude quakes usually cause little or no damage. There is always the possibility, however, that a higher-magnitude quake could occur that would cause serious damage. You can do a lot in advance to make sure that you and your family are as well prepared as possible to deal with a major earthquake.

TO BE PREPARED:

- Prepare a Home Earthquake Plan**
- Prepare Disaster Supply Kits**
- Know What to Do When the Shaking Begins**
- Know What to Do When the Shaking Stops**

PREPARING A HOME EARTHQUAKE PLAN

- Identify a safe place in every room - under a sturdy table or desk or against an inside wall where nothing can fall on you.
- **DROP, COVER, AND HOLD ON:** Drop under a sturdy desk or table, hold on, and protect your eyes by pressing your face against your arm. If there is no table or desk nearby, sit on the floor against an interior wall away from windows, bookcases, or tall furniture that could fall on you.

- Teach children to DROP, COVER, AND HOLD ON! Families should practice this together at least twice a year.
- Have an exit plan: identify at least two exit routes from each room in your home or office.
- Identify a place for all family members to meet in the event that you are separated. Have a backup location if the first location is unusable/inaccessible.
- Hold earthquake drills with the family.
- Make yourself familiar with your home fire extinguisher and learn how to use it. (The Post Safety Office will be providing training on this subject)
- Inform babysitters and caregivers of your plan.
- Learn how to shut down utilities – the main electric breaker, natural gas shutoff and the water main shutoff.
- American personnel should ensure their E&E radios are charged and operational and participate in radio tests. Note: In emergency situations cell phone networks often fail. E&E radios are your most reliable form of emergency communication.
- American personnel should be sure their family members are familiar with their E&E radios and know how to use them in the event of an emergency.
- Take a first aid class and keep your training current.
- Ensure that all members of the family are familiar with the information in this notice about what to do before, during and after earthquakes.

PREPARING A DISASTER SUPPLY KIT

Keep emergency supplies someplace that can be accessible after an earthquake. Be sure everyone in your family knows where everything is located. It is a good idea to prepare a backpack / “go kit” with essential emergency items. You may wish to prepare such a kit for each adult member of the family. Parents may wish to provide backpacks with adjusted inventories for their children. It is wise to keep items like a flashlight and sturdy shoes near your bed.

Backpack/Go-Kit Items:

- Small first aid kit and essential medications.
- Flashlight(s) with extra batteries. It would be useful to have both hand-held flashlights and smaller flashlights/lamps with ready-made harnesses designed to be worn on one’s head.
- Tools – multi-purpose folding/collapsible tools (Leatherman-brand tools), with pliers, knife, screwdriver and can opener.

- Dust masks, work gloves, safety/dust goggles, duct tape and a coil of rope.
- Two ½ liter bottles of water.
- Dry/sealed energy foods/snacks.
- Whistle on a lanyard/cord (useful for search operations).
- “Space” or “Survival” blankets. These tough, foil-like blankets fold into very compact pouches. They can be used for emergency weather protection and to carry injured people.
- Matches and candles.
- Battery powered or hand-crank AM/FM radio. (Note: radios that can be recharged with built-in, hand-crank power generators can be bought in the U.S. for as little as \$40.)
- Hat, sunglasses, sun block and sun block/lip balm.
- Notepad, ballpoint pen and marking pen.

Other Items/Larger Quantities:

- Larger first aid kit and more essential medications.
- Bottled water – at least three gallons of water per person.
- Canned and dehydrated foods to last each person in your family at least three days.
- A can opener (manual), eating utensils and disposable plates/dishes.
- Tools – hammer, shovel, pry bar, plastic sheeting, duct tape.
- Fire extinguisher.
- Toilet paper and paper towels (store them in their plastic wrapping).
- Plastic bags, large (trash barrel size) and small.
- Re-sealable (zip-lock) plastic bags to protect essential items from dust and moisture.
- Bedding – blankets or sleeping bags.
- Cleansing towelettes in sealed foil packages.
- Matches and candles.
- Extra clothing, sturdy shoes.
- Special items for infant, elderly, or disabled family members.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE SHAKING BEGINS

- DROP, COVER, AND HOLD ON!
- Move only a few steps to a nearby safe place.
- Stay out of elevators and stairwells.
- Stay indoors until the shaking stops and you are sure it is safe to exit.
- Stay away from windows.
- In a high-rise building, know that the fire alarms and sprinklers may activate during or after a quake.
- If you are in bed, hold on and stay there, protecting your head with a pillow.
- If you are outdoors, find a clear spot away from buildings, trees, and power lines. Drop to the ground.
- If you are in a car, slow down and drive to a clear place.
- Stay in the car until the shaking stops. Do not stop under bridges, underpasses, power lines or trees.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE SHAKING STOPS

- Check yourself for injuries and protect yourself from further danger by putting on long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes, and work gloves.
- Meet your family members in your pre-selected gathering place.
- Check others for injuries. Give first aid for serious injuries.
- Look for and extinguish small fires and eliminate fire hazards.
- If you smell natural gas or think it is leaking, turn off the gas by closing the main shut-off valve that is part of the gas supply line leading to the stove. (Remember, only a professional should turn the gas back on.)
- Beware of downed electrical power lines- they may still be charged with electricity and very dangerous.
- If you detect leaking plumbing, turn off the water at the control valve nearest the leak. Inspect other plumbing for damage- you may need to turn off the water at the main control valve.
- Beware when entering or walking on without structures without obvious damage- they may not be as stable as they were before the quake. Assume that balconies have been weakened and are unsafe.
- Listen to the radio for instructions. Personnel with E&E radios should not call in to Post One unless they require emergency assistance. (If you cannot reach the Embassy on Channel 1, switch to Channel 2.) If everyone tries to call in to Post One at once, the system could overload and crash.
- Expect aftershocks. Each time you feel one, DROP, COVER AND HOLD ON!
- Inspect your home for damage and get everyone out if your home is unsafe.
- Use the telephone only to report life-threatening emergencies.
- Stay calm and assist others.